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New family doctor wants to return to rural Montana

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special

NEW FAMILY DOCTOR WANTS TO RETURN TO RURAL MONTANA

by
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UM Information Services

Any rural Montana community that needs a young, energetic family physician should keep an eye out for Dr. Lesley McGalliard.

McGalliard, a ^{resident} / of Heron, Montana, recently graduated with honors from the University of Washington School of Medicine. And she's looking for a community in Montana where she can set up her own family practice after completing her medical residency.

Her plan to return to rural life is unusual when most of her classmates are headed for careers in larger cities. But then McGalliard has often taken the unusual path on her way to becoming a physician.

From the start, she was different from most medical students. In 1974, she graduated with honors from the University of Montana with a bachelor of arts degree in botany. And she's very proud of that background.

According to McGalliard, her pride stems from the national reputation of the UM botany department and the fact that she has an education in something different from the standard pre-med or zoology degrees of most medical students.

"My education at the University of Montana was very positive," she says, "but it didn't prepare me for medical school--in fact, nothing did.

"I chose medicine as a career because I saw it as a way that I could live in a rural area all my life and be important to the community."

McGalliard also claims her UM education was comparable to that of her fellow students from Harvard, Yale and Stanford Universities. /"They missed out on cross-country skiing, hiking and good living."

And she believes the close relationships she had with faculty and students at the University of Montana will help her in her medical career.

McGalliard was one of 10 students chosen from Montana to enter the WAMI medical program, during its second year in 1974. WAMI, which stands for Washington, Alaska, Montana and Idaho, is a contractual arrangement which allows students from any of the four states to attend the UW School of Medicine while paying in-state tuition and fees.

The first year in WAMI, Montana students study basic medical courses at Montana State University in Bozeman. They then transfer to the University of Washington in Seattle to complete medical school. And finally, students choose locations in the four WAMI states to fulfill their clerkship and/residency requirements.

McGalliard says completing residency through the WAMI program is a good way to expose residents to a variety of geographic settings. But many WAMI students don't return to their home states because of the appeal of bigger careers in large cities. And Montana / a problem retaining its medical students because it offers no residencies.

The 25-year-old doctor finished her last year of clinical clerkship in December at St. Patrick's Hospital in Missoula. There she studied cardiology and neurology techniques under the supervision of attending physicians.

She is now a surgical intern in Seattle and / complete her residency in family practice at a hospital in Spokane, Wash.

McGalliard looks at her new career not only as a profession but also as a personal challenge. "Working with people is the fascinating part of medicine, and solving someone's medical problem is worth the time if you're really committed to it."

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